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1. Atlas of the River San Francisco, with Appendix; 2. Ditto of the River Amazons; 3. Ditto of Brazil, in Provinces. By Dr. Candido Mendes D'Almeida. Presented by the Brazilian Minister. Also two copies of the City of Buenos Ayres. By S. Salas, &c., &c. A Photograph of a Model of Victoria, Australia. Presented by C. D. Liger, Surveyor-General.

The following paper was read by the Author:—

From Metemma to Damot, along the Western Shores of the Tana Sea.

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[EXTRACTS.]

THE distance from Metemma to Aschfa, the district where we met Theodore, is about 240 English miles; and to accomplish that journey we had to march through passes and defiles, follow the western shores of the Tana Sea, cross some of the finest provinces of Abyssinia, and ride over undulating plains, graced by the presence of mighty herds of cattle, or walk single file amidst boundless cultivated fields.

The line of march necessity enforced upon our troops was the lofty, irregular, mountain-chain separating the sandy shores of the Red Sea from the plateaus, plains, and valleys, of Abyssinia Proper. A barren, desolate tract, the watershed of the Mareb, the Tacazzé, the Jeddah, and the Bechelo, as different from the lands they beautify and enrich as the snow-capped peaks of the Swiss Alps, the cradle of many a mighty stream, are a dreary contrast to the rich and fertile regions watered by the Isel or the Rhone.

After leaving Metemma, the first 30 miles retain still many of the features of the plain, mingled here and there with the first vestiges of the mountain-ranges, rising so bold and grand on the distant horizon; stunted acacias, our constant companions in the Soudan, cover here again every rising ground, forming small detached woods, graced by tall venerable tamarinds, or entangled with some thorny varieties of the *leguminosæ*. The ravines and small valleys, luxuriant with tropical vegetation, are but miniatures of the glorious valley of the Atbara. All these have their rivulets, and, like the mighty tributary of the Nile, are lined with trees, similar to the boulevards of a great city, and surrounded by unweeded gardens so lovely in their savage beauty.

When we passed, the tall grass was just losing its green tinge for a paler hue; trampled and beaten down on the almost hidden path, it covered, like a carpet, the stony ground—a welcome friend to our

barefooted followers. Every tiny valley, every cool ravine, rejoices in its brook of limpid water, a crystal line playing in flowery beds, the home of a countless host of the feathered tribe. But day by day the scene changes, and, as we approach Wochnee, several hills sentries of the distant blue mountains, lay in our route. The rounded hillocks give way to conical mountains or to small plateaus—diminutive models of the highland plains; still the gum-trees, now and then the sycamore, further on the fir. But, as we advance, the whole country assumes a more barren aspect; the valleys are longer and wider, the stream deeper, more rapid, bounding, wearing away the earthy banks, and carrying to Egypt Abyssinia's valuable tribute. Each hill we cross has more and more the appearance of the temperate zone, and even the valleys, deep as they are—now several thousand feet above the Soudan Plain—have lost much of the beautiful vegetation we so much admired, are stern, cold, and formal, nearly desolate; and, were it not for the bamboo forests, so stately, so erect, so lofty—giants laughing at us poor pigmies as we dodged through their thick close lines,—they would be as barren as the very hills themselves. Volcanic rocks have now everywhere taken the place of alluvium, sandstone, or granite; columnar basalt shapes into ambas and forts the crest of many a mountain; our zigzag road is paved with dolomite, and pumice and conglomerate roll under our feet as we wade through the mountain-torrents.

After leaving Sounkwaha we cross the last small mountain-range that stood in our way, and from that elevation survey the whole space between us and the Abyssinian plateau. The mountain-chain appears broken up, and the whole space dotted with closely-packed isolated lofty peaks, separated by longitudinal valleys, all leading from one to another, and in the direction of the high land in front. At last we reach the foot of a towering perpendicular wall, some 2000 feet above our heads; the officers of our escort lead the way, and we follow, climbing the side of the precipice by a narrow, slippery footpath, at times so steep, so abrupt, enough even to make the Alpine chamois giddy, that we shut our eyes, and dare not even cast a passing glance at the terrible yawning abyss below. Once fairly on the Abyssinian plateau, the traveller is amply rewarded for his pains; but what struck us even more than the wonderful panorama displayed before our eyes, was the sudden and complete change in everything around us, and it seemed difficult to conceive that only a few thousand feet separate such opposite and different climes.

To us, for so long denizens of the plains, the mountain breeze appeared delightfully fresh and cool, and our old enemy the sun

we contemptuously allowed to play over our uncovered heads. The grass, short and fine,—nay, daisies and blue-bells,—could this be Africa, or were we the playthings of fancy, the victims of delusion, and awake dreaming of home and country strolls? A roll on the flower-speckled grass, a long pull of the fresh breeze, that best of stimulants, and feeling strong and refreshed, we stroll about in search of the unknown: there is a charming bower, a blending of the sweet smelling jessamine and of the wild white rose; there, behind yonder village a dense grove, full of cactuses, dark with cedars, enclosed by roses, jessamines, and sweet briar.

A few miles from Walli Dabba, on our road to Kanoa, the chief of our escort bids us himself abide awhile and admire the gorgeous noble vista. Behind us a long blue line of mountains, running west to east; and towards their north-eastern extremity, under almost yonder hidden peak, a dimly defined clump of trees marks the spot where Gondar then stood. From those mountains a green shelving plain dotted with villages and many ruins, watered by hundreds of rivulets, all flowing towards the south, stretches to the very margin of the lake, a fertile region—Dembia, the granary of Gondar. To the left more mountains, running north to south, seem to rise from the lake itself, towering higher and higher as they disappear towards the east; and on a level with the loftiest peak begins Abyssinia's noblest province—Begemder, the land of sheep and corn. In front the lake stretches far and wide, and beyond, towards the south, a dim outline, the bold towering Godjam range. To our right, extensive shelving undulating plains, with now and then a dark peak on the distant horizon, some lonely Amba, in Theodore's native land, Koura, or part of the range that bounds Atchefur towards the west.

Our route now leads us through a fine open country, up and down a succession of rounded hillocks, shelving towards the Tana Sea. No timber, hardly even a solitary tree, now and then a few thorny bushes, our favourites the wild rose and the jessamine, or a few kolquals in sheltered ravines; altogether a wild-looking savannah, replete with game, the home of herds of antelopes, staring vaguely as we pass along, and as yet untaught to see in every man an enemy, unmindful of our presence, resuming their interrupted meal.

To Goja the descent is gradual but constant, and that village, quite on a level with the lake itself, cannot be less than a thousand feet lower than the plateau of Walli Dabba. From that spot (Goja), the lake is not unlike a huge picture; green shelving shores and blue distant highlands are the frames worthy of such a gem.

From Goja to Belass we cross the same undulating plains; but

near the lake itself the ground is frequently marshy, and the many small creeks appear from a distance like green waving fields, so dense are the bulrushes.

Here we meet, for the first time since the nearing the lake, with the fig-bearing sycamore; and at Amous Gebié (the market of Thursday) with some fine specimens of the Chuba, a kind of laurel under whose wide-spreading branches, the villagers from many a mile around held in former days a weekly well supplied market.

From Belass the ground insensibly but gradually shelves upwards towards the south and west. Villages now and then begin to appear, scattered, dispersed, and far apart, mingled with ruins, the same black ruin, the work of fire lighted by a pitiless hand, casting a gloom on the few standing hamlets a passing fancy allowed to remain. For the first time since leaving Walli Dabba, we see a few hungry-looking peasants, ploughing long stony fields, and urging their emaciated-looking bullocks, with shouts and cruel blows from the long hippopotamus whip, into a slow monotonous step.

From Kanoa to Aschfa (frontier of Damot) it is impossible to conceive a more lovely country, to dream of a more beautiful fertile region, slightly hilly, the prospect is even more pleasing than the green plains watered by the Tana Sea.

The province of Wandigé, with its long, rolling, undulating ground is something, I fancy, very much like the American prairie, studded here and there with isolated conical peaks, of an average height of 800 to 1000 feet. Mountain-ranges appear to the west and south, the watershed of the Blue Nile, and by a gradual ascent our route takes us across some small mountains, the foremost range of the Gojam chain. Villages crown almost every mound, unless the tall cedars, the sycamore, the guicho, and wild coffee-tree, point out the secluded spot above which arises, half-hidden by the dense foliage the modest Coptic cross.

Thousands of cattle graze over almost boundless natural meadows, watered by countless streams, and only checked in their vastness by endless cultivated fields, wherein in the same vista can be seen the peasant ploughing, the green sprouting corn, and the ripened harvest ready for the sickle.

We cross the Kiltie, and enter the land of the Agaws.

One tribe, it is said, originally with the Agaws of Lasta,—did they at one time possess themselves of Central Abyssinia, and limit their conquest by the Lasta Mountains and the Godjam chain? Were they, as some assert, the Auchtoctons, inhabitants of the land driven and scattered east and west by the Amharas? No record of the past, no deed of the present day, can bear out that theory. Not

they the brave, hardy mountaineers of Lasta, the bold horsemen of Agaw Medar: never has Amhara lance driven out of their fathers' land the gallant Agaws; they are conquerors, not a conquered race! Like other Galla hordes, they came some day from Central Africa: one section of the tribe settled on the lovely plateaus watered by countless streams, a land of milk and honey; others, of a more adventurous spirit, pushed further on, and took possession of a mountainous district, better fitted for a war-loving clan. I like the Agaws; I like their fair handsome faces, their long silky hair, their well-knit forms, their daring, their courage; and, above all, feel grateful for their kind genial welcome, such as only a brave race can give.

Agaw Medar, more favoured by nature, more prosperous even than Wandigé and Atchefur, a land of horse as well as cattle, was also more fortunate and never fell under Theodore's displeasure. He was too cunning to attempt to plunder a land protected by such a valiant race. Here we saw the Galla cows, with their immense long horns, some four feet long, gracefully worn by small, short, well-knitted cattle; here also we met with the wild peaches, sweet limes, and the beautiful kosso-tree, a noble, gracefully stately bunch of flowers, pink-rose or yellowish white, dropping like golden grapes, —a priceless remedy under a lovely form.

Onward we march, and the same fertility prevails everywhere; but the aspect of the country somewhat changes,—more hilly, more wooded. We pass by Zugda, Zarkatcha, Gardomite, Kanka, small towns rather than villages; churches and market-places, those signs of trade and piety, are nowhere more numerous. Nevertheless the Agaws are considered a rude and unchristian race; churches may arise around their villages, but still at heart they are Pagans, says the Amhara. For me, who only saw them good, kind, and hospitable, whatever heresy may be grafted on their faith, I believe that they are truer followers of Him who loved such as them, than the vain-glorious, bigoted, self-worshipping Abyssinian.

We pass Quorquora and the River Terinka, flowing towards the Blue Nile; more villages, more cultivated fields, more flowery prairies, rich in horse and cattle; we cross the Quaschim and the Gamassou, again to wind through rivers. Skirting hills on our left, we pass at the foot of the small pictureque amba of Ziri, and leaving the hilly plain now wind our way through wooded valleys, and ascend the white sandstone mount of Injerabeer.

On the banks of the Messinie, with regret we bid good-bye to our Agaw friends, and pass into Damot.

Another day's march, and we reach our journey's end; we approach

the Imperial camp, so well hidden in valleys and woods from the gaze of all that, were it not for the smoke arising from miles around yonder hill, graced by the white, red, and black tents of Theodore, we might have believed that the bold spirit of that strange man dwelt alone in that plundered, desolate region.

After a day's halt in the Emperor's camp, Theodore sends us word that on the morrow we will march with him; the army cries for bread, he says, and the bad peasants refuse to bring in any more supplies. Why not have spoken the truth? and said, "The enemy protects their fields; to feed my army I must plunder the few districts still faithful to me."

At the eastern extremity of a valley, on an average about a mile in width, separating Damot from Metcha, we crossed the Blue Nile. At that spot that river flows between well-wooded banks, some 10 feet high and about 30 feet in width; the stream is on an average from 2 to 3 feet in depth, the current moderate, and the bed stony.

We parted from Theodore at Flagitta, on the border of Agaw Medar, and passed again through the same fertile region we had crossed a few days before, this time, some miles to the eastward. Here, again, we meet with a succession of small running streams, all flowing eastward towards the Nile; after a few days we once more followed our former route, and from Zugda back to the lake halted generally on the very same ground we had selected on a previous occasion.

We were bound for Kourata, the principal commercial city on the eastern shore of the Tana Sea, almost opposite Kanao. Theodore had intimated the desire (his slightest wishes were ever for us formal orders), that we should abide at Kourata until Consul Cameron and his party should have joined us; he advised us to cross the lake in native canoes, sending our horses and mules by land to Kourata.

We did not tarry this time at Kanao, but pushed on at once for the lake some 4 miles due east from that place, and encamped near a small Waito village on the very beach itself.

A few days were required to bring from Kourata, Dek, and other ports, the several hundred bulrush-canoes we required; and, as the whole Imperial fleet at the time in existence was not deemed sufficient to convey our large party, the Waitos were ordered at once to collect bulrushes and build a few dozen of these pretty, but rather frail skiffs.

The poor Waitos, at first sight, are not very prepossessing; and to their uncouth appearance, as well as to their indulgence in the reputed unclean flesh of the hippopotamus, are they indebted for

the kind of odium in which they are held. Supposed to be in league with boudas, ginns, and other evil spirits,—a slur not to be despised in a land where to be feared is better than to be respected,—they are generally left alone.

The Waitos rejoiced at the sight of our rifles, and were the first to propose to lead us against the huge quadruped, their foe and favourite food.

Accustomed to attack the hippopotamus with their short spears, a chase full of dangers and perils; expert fishermen, the only sailors of that inland sea; bred to hardships and fierce struggles; they are brave and speak lightly of the fearful wounds but too often their share in the life and death strife between them and the infuriated monster. Many succumb in the exciting contest, whilst some more fortunate live to boast of their hard-won scars.

We did not join the Abyssinians in their odium against these poor people: on the contrary, finding them civil and obliging, we treated them with kindness, gave them, unasked, many a trifle, and saw with pleasure that they deeply felt our considerate manner, and knew how when treated as fellow-men to behave as such.

On the 13th of February we were paddled over to the island of Dek, and to stimulate our splashers (I cannot call them rowers) we offered a prize for the three first arrivals. At starting, the novelty of the idea, and the hope of enriching themselves, produced a considerable excitement among the Waitos; but after a while, when it appeared from the lead some of the canoes had gained that the race was over, the natural apathy of all Africans overcoming their excited passions made them turn a deaf ear to all appeals, and nothing we could say could induce them to try to redeem the day's fortune,—the foremost, as well as last, resuming their ordinary snail's-pace.

Dek is a cluster of several islands. The two largest separated by a narrow and deep channel, appear, except on near approach, to form only one, about 7 miles in length to a couple in breadth. Around them are grouped several of a smaller size; one of them, visible from a great distance, is merely a mountain-peak arising abruptly from the water.

The larger islands are inhabited; contain several large villages and four churches, all of great sanctity. Large and small are all well wooded; and no prettier spot, no more fairy-like island, could be imagined than those of Dek. They give to the scenery a charm, even the Leman with all its beauties cannot rival; nothing can be more graceful on near approach than their dark basaltic walls a few feet above the water, covered with a splendid luxuriant vegetation

gracefully bending over the sides, and reflecting their charming shadows in the deep blue waters of the lake.

The following morning we started for Kourata. Kourata is a very ancient city: King Claudius's queen built and endowed a church on that small headland, and, as Abyssinnia was at all times a land of strife and warfare, merchants eagerly sought the protection of such a sacred asylum, and soon an important commercial city arose at the foot of the church of Kudos-Georgis.*

Many of the houses are built of stone and mud, and those of the principal merchants boast of wooden doors, square rooms, and ornamental ceilings. Some of the best houses were placed at our disposal; but we were too fond of cleanliness, fresh air, and abundance of water, not to avail ourselves of the proximity of the lake.

Except towards its north-east extremity, we have been able to arrive at a very accurate knowledge of the Tana Sea.

We saw it in its general outline first from the heights of Walli Dabba; secondly, from the promontory of Zagé; we followed it along the western shores from Tankal to Kanoa, and crossed it in native canoes from Wandigé to Dek and Kourata, and several times between that city and Zagé. Theodore had for once told us the truth when, on leaving him in Agaw Medar, he said "I send you to Kourata, as I know from Plowden that Englishmen like our lake." He was right: we enjoyed the lake immensely; we loved its clear fresh water, its calm stillness; the blue mountains and dark island reflected in its unruffled surface; we were never tired of gazing on the plying canoes, on the grotesque frolics of the snorting hippopotami, at the long files of laughing maidens, winding their way along the beach, bending under the weight of large water-jars; . . . the very bulrushes themselves had their charms. Without the lake, the few—very few—happy days we spent in Abyssinia would not live in our memory a pleasing contrast to our many misfortunes.

Such is, in its general outline, the Tana Sea, and the several provinces of Western Abyssinia we passed through. The climate on the whole is good; in the valley of the lake itself some parts are feverish and unhealthy; the heat also in the middle of the day is not sufficiently tempered by the cool mountain breezes, but some miles from the lake, or a few hundred feet above its level, even the plateau of Tschelga, the high plains of Atchefur and Agaw, with all their many advantages, cannot in that respect claim any superiority—all are alike cool, pleasant, and healthy. Western Abyssinia is within the range of the tropical rains; there much earlier, longer,

* St. George.

and more important than in Eastern and Northern Abyssinia. The whole—be it valleys, plains, or plateaus—is watered by countless streams; the soil, the detritus of volcanic rocks, is so rich, of such fertility, and enjoying as it does so many climateric advantages, we cannot be surprised if three harvests are usually reaped in a year. Teff, the staple food of the country, grows almost everywhere, except on the higher plateaus, where corn and barley thrive so well. Cotton covers the plains of Foggara; wine is made from the grapes of Madre Marian; honey, fragrant from the sweet perfume of wild flowers, is ludicrously abundant; and the herds of cattle, in peaceful times, of such magnitude, in numbers hardly to be credited, enough to supply a thousand cities. Western Abyssinia, well may we exclaim, is, indeed, a land of milk and honey, a “land blessed by God but cursed by man.”

The paper will be published entire in the ‘Journal,’ vol. xxxix.

The PRESIDENT said this communication of Dr. Blanc’s described that side of Abyssinia which had not been explored by any European in a scientific manner, and was not known even to Bruce: we were, therefore, infinitely indebted to Dr. Blanc for bringing before us this prelude, as it were, to the narrative of the two years’ sufferings which he had afterwards, unhappily, to undergo. He would ask Dr. Blanc to give, *vivâ voce*, some account of his capture and imprisonment with Mr. Rassam, the head of the expedition, and to give the meeting his view of the personal character of Theodore, a tyrant who, while capable of the most horrible cruelties towards the weak and unoffending, quailed before the brave Agaws who resisted his power.

Dr. BLANC said they left Aden in 1864, to convey a letter to the Emperor Theodore. Consul Cameron was in chains; and he wrote to Egypt, saying that there was no release possible for him unless a certain answer was given to a letter that he had forwarded from King Theodore. The party, consisting of Mr. Rassam, Lieut. Prideaux and himself, waited about thirteen months at Massowah before Theodore assented to their going forward. They were treated very well on their first arrival, and were promised that everything should be done according to the Queen’s request, and that all the captives should be set free and made over to them. The former captives reached Kourata on the 12th March, and Mr. Rassam informed the King of their arrival. Theodore sent, saying he wanted to know whether they thought that he was in fault, or that the captives were in fault. They had heard on several occasions that when Theodore spoke of Consul Cameron and Mr. Stern he lost his temper, and they thought it advisable to say that the captives were wrong. Theodore was, for a time, well pleased with the answer; but the moment it was acknowledged they were wrong, according to the Abyssinian view of the case, the King demanded a substitute or compensation for the injuries they had done him, and that compensation was to be in the shape of workmen. Mr. Rassam very cleverly got over that difficulty; but Theodore, when he saw that kindness and friendship would not gain his ends, determined on violent measures. On the 13th of April he sent for Mr. Rassam, Lieut. Prideaux and himself, stating that they were to go home. He did not want to see the captives, as they were bad people; but Mr. Rassam and his companions were his beloved friends, and he could not allow them to depart for England without bidding them good-bye. They were all to meet at Taoukal at the extremity of the lake. The baggage was to go by boat, the mules and horses by land. When they reached Zagé he received them with his usual courtesy; but, instead of being taken to a tent, they were first conducted to a

large audience-hall, which was lined by all the great officers of the state in their gala dress. They had no sooner entered the hall than the chief minister bowed to the ground. The King was not present. The throne was at the extremity of the room, and was empty. Nine men, who had been posted there on purpose, rushed upon them, took away their caps, uniforms, and swords, and dragged them to the other extremity of the hall, where they were told to sit down and wait the King's commands. He sent some very foolish questions,—asked why they had not brought the former prisoners, why they had written to the coast, and many questions which were of no more importance. After a time he dismissed them, and kept them three days in a small tent. On the morning of the fourth day he said, "Now your people have come back from Kourata, we will meet to-morrow and be reconciled." On the 16th of April they were brought before the King in the presence of his troops, and they were told to sit down. They had not been seated many minutes when they saw Cameron and their countrymen brought in chained two and two. He had them placed before him. He asked kindly how they were. They all bowed and kissed the ground, and after that he opened the chains of Cameron and Bardel. Then he asked them questions, and completed the proceedings by reading his pedigree, according to his usual custom. After that, they were left at Zagé in one enclosure. They had tents, but they were a kind of semi-prisoners, and could not go out without a guard of honour. Flad was sent to England, and they had to wait for his answer. Not long afterwards they accompanied the King to Gaffat, where he gave them some of the best houses in the place. The next morning he came and said it was not a suitable place for them to live in; so he had a large workshop transformed into a residence for them. He had it lined with native cloth, and he himself swept the room. The third day he came again, and said that would not do either; so he took them to another house. Each time he brought his throne with him and left it in the room, with the intention that one of them might sit upon it,—it being the law of the country that anybody sitting on the throne was worthy of death. Luckily they knew all about it, and they asked him to take it away, which he consented to do. The next day—the 25th of June—he sent for them, and said they must go up to his camp to be witnesses of a political trial. Instead of being received by one of his officers, they were ushered into a black tent, and told to sit down on the ground without any carpets. They were told they must stay near the King; he could not allow them to be out of his sight. He taxed them with conspiring with the Turks and the French against him, and said if it were not true he would release them, and their guns and property should be restored to them. Dr. Blanc said he was sent by the King to Gaffat to look after some of his people who were sick. He stayed there some days, and the others, except one, remained in the black tent at Debra Tabor. For several days all went on well, when one day he came to the foundry to see some guns that were being made, and he sent word for Dr. Blanc to come over and see him. As he was going he was joined by two European workmen, and they met the King in the road. They pulled off their caps and bowed to him. The workmen put on their caps again, while he put his in his pocket. It was lucky that he did so, for no sooner had they reached the foundry than the King began to ask him how he was. As they left the foundry a beggar came up and asked for alms, saying that the English lords had relieved him, and he now asked the King to assist him. The King said, "Whom do you call 'Lord' in this country except myself?" and turned round and ordered his executioners to beat him to death, and in about two minutes the poor beggar was killed. But this murder did not seem to cool him: on the contrary, the sight of blood acted upon him as it does on wild animals, and irritated him still more. He turned round with his lance in rest, and, seeing Mr. Rosenthal, said, "Seize him," and asked him several questions; and then, pointing to Dr. Blanc, said, "Seize that man whom they call a doctor." Immediately

twenty people rushed upon him and seized him. For a few minutes Theodore talked to Mr. Rosenthal, and then turned to the workmen and upbraided them for having covered themselves after he had passed. This seemed rather to cool him, but, turning round to the soldiers, he said, "Why do you hold him? Who told you to hold him? Who told you to seize him?" They immediately let Dr. Blanc go, as if he had been an electric machine. He called him forward and said, "Doctor, you are my friend, we have always been good friends together; but some people speak bad of me, and I want to try them, so you must come up to Debra Tabor and be a witness of the trial. Upon reaching Debra Tabor the King sent for Rassam and Stern, and said, "I want to try you." When they were all in line he addressed himself to Mr. Stern, and then turned towards the others and asked some stupid questions, as he generally did. At the end of the affair they were taken to an empty powder-magazine, which was very small, without either window or door, only a small opening to creep in at. When they were inside they could not see each other. At last some guards came with lights and brought in some skins for them to lie upon. Just as they were thinking they were quiet for the night, the King sent a message to say he was coming; and as he was generally in an irritable mood at night from drinking, they were alarmed at hearing it, and sent and tried to persuade him not to come. However, he did come, bringing a large jar of mead in his hand, and accompanied by a man bringing a bottle of brandy. He tasted some of it to show that it was not poisoned, and then said, "We will chat now. Tell me all about the Pope of Rome." They remained in the dark hole for about three days, when they were sent on a march with his majesty for five days. On the 12th July they reached Magdala, and were shown into their prison. It was an empty house, formerly occupied by one of his chiefs, a small place, about the size of the table before them, and the whole eight of them were sent in there. Three days they were left alone. They had guards outside, and the captives had to sleep some outside for want of room. On the 10th July the chiefs came and said they had a little business with them. The little business consisted in putting on chains. These chains were rather heavy, weighing about ten pounds, and consisting of three links and two large rings. They were pushed on the ground, and these were placed on their feet; the operation being done by a blacksmith with a large sledge-hammer, until the two extremities were bent in, and then riveted down. The operation was rather painful, because the blow did not always fall straight upon the iron but on the side, and struck against the bone. They were kept in chains for twenty-one months, shut up in that place with nothing to eat but what they could buy. The King said they were gentlemen and were rich, and it would be unbecoming for him to feed them. Fortunately they always managed to live. Sometimes they could only procure very poor rations, sometimes they were able to buy and kill a cow. During those twenty-one months the King was plundering his country, but his troops abandoned him more and more, until they had dwindled from forty thousand or fifty thousand men down to not more than ten thousand by the time the English troops arrived off Magdala. These men were employed in dragging his guns up to Magdala, and carrying his property up to the fort. When he arrived there on the 29th, the servants rushed into the place looking very sad, and said, "The King is come on the mountain, and he never comes without killing somebody;" and they added that he was a little drunk, which made it worse still. In about half an hour's time he sent for Mr. Rassam, and when Mr. Rassam approached him the King seems to have got into a good temper all at once, for he received him very well, and said, "Oh, where are those two gentlemen that came with you? I do not know them. They are neither my friends nor my enemies, but if you will stand security for them I will open their chains." Mr. Rassam said he would be security for them, upon which the King sent for Mr. Flad and Samuel to open their chains. To open the chains they put

in a wedge of iron so as to separate them a little, and then very strong ropes were passed in and formed into loops. In those loops large stakes were placed, and five men pulled on each rope; so that something must give way, either the chain, or the ropes, or the leg. It depended upon whether the prisoner was in favour, for sometimes it was the leg that was broken. Fortunately for them they were in good favour, and they received no serious injury. After the chains were taken off, the King sent for them and said, "How are you? How have you spent your time?" He said he had imprisoned them, though they had done nothing, because the Government was bad, and he wanted to show them that he was a strong king; and now that the English were coming, he wanted to show that he was not afraid, and therefore he had opened their chains. At last he dismissed them and went down to his camp. On the 7th April he sent for all the prisoners, natives and Europeans, and they were all taken down. He was all day on the height Selassie, looking at the troops coming forward. When he saw them he was rather good-tempered, and would come down and open the chains of some of the prisoners. When he did not see them he was rather sulky, and would kill some prisoners. It was on that day that he killed some three hundred by throwing them over the precipice. On the next morning he sent the Europeans back to the mountain, and said, "How dare the woman send troops to fight me!" He was rather angry in consequence of a message which he had received from Lord Napier that morning. He was anxious for a letter, but the moment the message came he would have nothing to do with it. On the next morning, Good Friday, the great battle was fought to which the captives were indebted for their deliverance, and, after the battle of Fala, he completely lost his mind, changed his tactics, sent for the prisoners, and said he had lost everything, and asked them to go and make peace between him and the English. Mr. Rassam said he would interpose, and suggested that Mr. Flad and Lieut. Prideaux should go for him. In the mean time the King had taken a little liquor, and he got very black again, and would not listen to the envoys when they came back. The next morning he sent for them, and asked what their advice was. A chief said the best thing was to listen to Mr. Rassam, and make peace with the English. The consequence was that Mr. Rassam, Mr. Flad, and Lieut. Prideaux were sent with a letter to Lord Napier; and an answer came into the camp, stating that if the King would submit to the English, and surrender himself and family, he should be honourably treated. He asked what was meant by honourable treatment. Did it mean that they should conquer his country, or treat him as a king? When Mr. Prideaux told him what was meant, he got into a fearful rage and wrote an impertinent letter, and called all his chiefs about him. At last he resolved to commit suicide, and he (Dr. Blanc) came to the conclusion that he also intended to kill the prisoners. At all events, on the 11th, the day after Fala, he sent for them in the afternoon with a message, "Go to your people; you are sent for. Your property you shall have another time." They thought it was rather a queer message, and the chiefs who brought it, who were friendly towards them, appeared very downcast and silent, and the head jailor was almost crying. They asked what was the matter, and had strong suspicions that the King wanted to kill them. They went down, and some of the chiefs sent them a message to say that he was in such a rage that if he met them he would kill them. However, they sent a message to the King to say they would not leave without wishing him good-bye. The man came back with a message that he would only see Mr. Rassam; the others he would not see, and they were to go away by a road which he mentioned. Rassam went to the King and the others marched along the road. They were told to stop a few minutes as the King was speaking to Mr. Rassam; then they were told to march on again. They thought it was all right, when all at once they came to a turn of the road which was on the side of the precipice, and just as they turned the corner they found themselves face to face with Theodore, who

was standing with twenty of his men in a line behind him, each with a musket over his shoulder. The King did not see them at first, as he was half-turned round speaking to the first man near him, and taking his musket from him. The Europeans stopped and waited till the King should turn round. When he did turn round he looked at them for a couple of seconds, and, then looking Dr. Blanc in the face, the expression of rage which they observed when they first saw him gave way to one of sadness, and he said in a low voice, "Good-bye, go away." They bowed low, and went away. After that they met Mr. Rassam and went on, thinking now they were perfectly safe; but, when they were getting outside the camp, one of the guards on the top of the mountain called out, "Stop, stop!" and messengers brought them their swords, which the King had taken away two years before, with the message, "I have taken care of your swords; now I send them back to you again. Good-bye." They marched on, and a few miles onwards they reached the English camp, and rejoiced to find themselves amongst their countrymen free from the captivity which they had so long endured.

The PRESIDENT then called upon General Sir Charles Staveley to say a few words, remarking that Geographers would never forget the obligations they owed to the gallant army under Lord Napier, which accomplished such great results; and not the least grateful was the talented gentleman who had just addressed them, for surely no diplomatist was ever sent on such a mission to such a sovereign as King Theodore.

Sir CHARLES STAVELEY said, as he had been called upon, he might, perhaps, remark upon the great contrast between the country which had just been described by Dr. Blanc and that which the army had to traverse. The province of Agaw was described as flowing with milk and honey. In the country the army passed through there was nothing at all except a little barley for the horses, and flour brought in by the natives; and he might add, except milk and honey. Lord Napier used to describe the country as a land of milk and honey, but scarcely anything else. With regard to the geographical features of the country, the army had to cross a succession of mountains and ravines, which increased in height and in depth as they went along the ridge or watershed. It was this which gave rise to the story told of a soldier in the 'Times,' who said: "They may call it a table-land, but I call it a table turned upside-down, and we are marching up and down the legs."

The PRESIDENT said we had already had excellent accounts of the great eastern ridge from the Secretary, Mr. Markham. At a future day the geology of that eastern ridge would be well described by Mr. Blandford; and Dr. Henry Cook had prepared a paper on the meteorology of the region. The communication to-night gave an account of a fertile region of Abyssinia with which we had hitherto been entirely unacquainted, and it completed our knowledge as far as English travellers had penetrated. The southern part of the country, on the eastern side of the Lake Tana, had been described by Dr. Beke, who described the Galla country a great many years ago, for which he received the Gold Medal of this Society. He congratulated Dr. Blanc upon having escaped, and upon having recovered his health; and he rejoiced that Her Majesty's Government had granted pecuniary recompenses to Mr. Rassam, Dr. Blanc, and Lieut. Prideaux.

Mr. CLEMENTS MARKHAM would only add that there was still an immense region to the south entirely unexplored, as fine a region as and probably a finer region than any in Abyssinia, extending from the point which Dr. Beke reached to the Equator, also a great mountainous table-land, which, as far as he knew, was entirely unknown. It had been reached as far as Kaffa by an aged Italian priest, but the other parts of that great region had not been visited by any European.